



November 17, 2016

Mr. Chris Yuan-Farrell  
Open Space Program Coordinator  
Great Outdoors Colorado  
1900 Grant Street #725  
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Chris:

On behalf of the Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition (COSC), I am pleased to send you a proposal in response to the Great Outdoors Colorado's Request for Proposal issued in August 2016. We applaud GOCO's commitment to Colorado's natural heritage by investing more intentionally in the development of a broader stewardship movement and we thank you for this opportunity to submit a proposal.

The COSC proposal offers a means by which Colorado's outdoor stewardship organizations will be able to more adeptly respond to growing stewardship needs while offering land managers the assurance they need to more effectively utilize volunteers. The proposal's tenets are based on establishing more uniform standard practices across organizations that will lead to greater opportunities for scaling our work through collaborative efforts and to more effectively measuring the direct stewardship impact on the land. We admit that this is an ambitious planning process yet we are really excited by its promising net results. We are also confident that the overarching outcomes of this planning effort – to be achieved steadily and over time - will result in a significant and permanent shift in the public's perception about their responsibility and role in caring for the outdoors.

Thank you for GOCO's commitment to this effort. We look forward to working closely with you and others at GOCO on ensuring success of this exciting and promising initiative.

If you need additional information for review of this proposal, please feel free to contact Dean Winstanley ([dean@voc.org](mailto:dean@voc.org)) or me ([ann@voc.org](mailto:ann@voc.org)).

Most sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ann Baker Easley".

Ann Baker Easley  
Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado  
Executive Director

cc: Jackie Miller, Director of Youth Initiatives, Great Outdoors Colorado



## COLORADO OUTDOOR STEWARDSHIP COALITION

*Caring for Colorado's Great Outdoors:  
Advancing Statewide Stewardship*

Planning Proposal to Great Outdoors Colorado  
November 17, 2016

The following proposal submitted on behalf of the Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition (COSC)<sup>1</sup> lays the groundwork for advancing Colorado's stewardship movement over the next four years to align with the interest and commitment of Great Outdoors Colorado (GOCO) in promoting and strengthening a more caring and committed public in safeguarding Colorado's natural heritage.

### Project Overview

We begin by stating that this proposal is an ambitious but promising undertaking. We are confident that the overarching outcomes of this planning effort – to be achieved steadily and over time - will result in a significant and permanent shift in the public's perception about their responsibility and role in caring for the outdoors. The proposal's framework rests on creating a unified system of proven practices designed to enable Colorado's outdoor stewardship organizations (OSOs) to more effectively recruit, retain and equip their volunteers to work with partnering land managers on impactful and critically important stewardship efforts. At the forefront is our firm commitment to build and strengthen intentional collaborative and scaled on-the-ground stewardship work that will encourage OSOs to make use of the tools created through this planning process, including shared systems for data collection and impact reporting and an adherence to a foundational set of organizational standards and best practices for optimal organizational effectiveness. Through these combined efforts, we believe there is enormous potential to empower Colorado's OSOs to collectively nurture greater, and more caring, generations of stewards for Colorado's natural and recreational resources.

Our proposal includes four paramount activities to be undertaken within a 15 month period that build on one another to achieve the four outcomes expressed by the GOCO Board in its

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<sup>1</sup> The Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition (COSC), a collaboration of volunteer stewardship organizations (groups that give their time to care for the outdoors and natural resources) and federal, state and local land managers, promotes stewardship of Colorado's outdoors, elevating the awareness and engagement of the public in caring for the state's outdoor spaces. Hosted by Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado, the Coalition has been working since 2010 to document and promote the collective impact of outdoor volunteer stewardship. A list of active COSC members is included as Appendix A.

authorization to expend funds to promote stewardship of Colorado's outdoor resources. The GOCO Board's four outcomes include: (1) increasing the quality and quantity of stewardship projects, (2) increasing the collective impact of stewardship organizations by advancing collaborative projects at-scale, (3) increasing the diversity of stewardship volunteers, and (4) engendering a stewardship ethic in Colorado's citizens.

The planning process will be guided by an advisory committee of the COSC with oversight and direction by the COSC as a whole. The proposed activities and processes will be coordinated and managed principally by contracted personnel, supplemented with substantial donated time by members of the COSC. During the 15 months, our objective will be to apprise and actively engage as many OSOs as possible, through online surveys, informational communications, and regional meetings. This planning process will also be informed by input and guidance from a broad range of public land managers (PLMs), thereby ensuring we are creating a system of practices that truly work, are sustainable and scalable over time, and most importantly, achieve the multiple purposes of public engagement and impactful on-the-ground stewardship.

In addition to managing this 15-month planning process, the COSC will continue to expand ongoing statewide participation in the coalition and the exciting components of this proposal. We believe that as the planning time period and the proposal activities evolve, so will the details of an effective and sustainable governance structure for the coalition.

## PROPOSAL ACTIVITIES

### 1) Development of a statewide OSO asset database

While a good deal of work has already been undertaken in this area through the *Caring for Colorado Public Lands* study<sup>2</sup>, the goal of this initial activity will be to fill the gaps in what is known about existing Colorado OSOs (and some other organizations that may provide limited outdoor volunteer stewardship capacity) and establish an online database for capturing the information. Through this undertaking, we will establish a basic but important portfolio of Colorado's existing stewardship entities with the intention to further define and expand OSO work throughout the state in the future.

In the *Caring for Colorado Public Lands* study, over 240 OSO leaders were contacted and 90 agreed to participate in the study's survey, which explored a wide range of questions, related to public land stewardship from both the perspective of public land managers and outdoor stewardship organizations. The study attempted to measure the capacity of stewardship organizations,

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<sup>2</sup> COSC commissioned OMNI Institute to produce this study – *Caring for Colorado Public Lands* – that was released in April 2014. The study identifies conditions facing both Colorado public land managers and volunteer stewardship organizations in their collective efforts to maintain the state's outdoor resources and residents' quality of life. Implementing strategies related to the report that expands Colorado's public lands stewardship capacity remains a top priority for the Coalition. For a copy of the report, visit [www.voc.org](http://www.voc.org).

recreational user groups and other community partners to mobilize people and engage them effectively and positively to work with land managers in caring for these places.

Almost half (47.8%) of the OSOs surveyed were located along the Front Range. Participation also was recruited from the South Central (17.8%), Southwest (16.7%) and Northwest (15.6%) regions. The northeast and southeast regions, which are comprised of the smallest percentage of public lands, did not have representation in the survey. To supplement and explore survey findings, three focus groups with OSO representatives were also conducted.

Although inadequate sample sizes in some regions did not allow for solid, region-specific findings, survey and interview responses strongly supported recommendations that suggested a need to better understand the capacities of OSOs, given their size, organizational structures, and geographical reach. Additionally, the previous survey did not explore nor discuss the potential of creating a more robust and collaborative stewardship collective throughout the state, a promising potential we believe now exists through this GOCO effort. Lastly, data tabulated by the research firm for this survey is not useable other than in its aggregated form.

Therefore, one of the primary outcomes of this proposed activity will be the establishment of a common online searchable database of existing OSOs, including basic identifying contact information, geographic location, service reach, annual volunteer capacity and type of stewardship offered. This important tool will enable OSOs, PLMs and funders to be better positioned to partner effectively, fill regional gaps and niches, and benefit from coordinated efforts such as regional technical and volunteer management training opportunities and collaborative large-scaled stewardship projects.

#### Asset Database – Deliverables

- Analyze existing baseline information about OSOs through *Caring for Colorado Public Lands* outreach information.
  
- Online survey of OSOs statewide.
  - Develop a survey instrument; distribute to a targeted group of at least 320 individuals at existing identified OSOs throughout Colorado. In addition to gathering initial, important information about each OSO, the survey is intended to identify those organizations that are committed to working collaboratively with the coalition on this initiative and its proposed database tools.
  - Undertake outreach to encourage and ensure high response rate.
  - Compile and evaluate survey responses.

- Establish a searchable, common, online database. Examine potential vendors and contract with reliable tech firm to build an online database that will list and manage information about OSOs throughout Colorado. Primary features of the database will include:
  - Separate records of OSO operating in Colorado to include name, location and relevant contact information, and organizational information such as scope of services and service area, average number of volunteers, number of employees and annual budget;
  - Annualized reporting function to record an OSO's stewardship accomplishments that have been specifically identified for inclusion in the database;
  - Capacity to capture an OSO's progress in meeting standards/best practices;
  - Robust reporting capability and remote, online accessibility by OSOs who participate as ongoing partners in the coalition;
  - Capacity to produce aggregated data and reports for use by OSOs, key funders, and other partners; and
  - Push notification (using email) to inform the coalition members about potential funding opportunities, regional meetings, trainings and other activities throughout the state.
  
- Develop a plan for ongoing development and maintenance of the asset database after the planning period.

## 2) Development of a set of standards that define OSO best practices

The proposed development of a pool of outdoor stewardship organizational standards directly responds to the heightened importance and need for a sustainable Colorado outdoor volunteer workforce – a qualified and competent “V-Force” to meet ever-growing stewardship needs of our state’s PLMs. Acceptance and adoption of these standards, to be compiled as an online, downloadable *Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Best Practices Guide*, is anticipated to amplify effectiveness within outdoor volunteer stewardship organizations and public land management agencies and improve the overall quality of stewardship work that these organizations provide, thereby offering PLMs a more consistent and trained volunteer labor force.

The Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Best Practices Guide will meet several important objectives that we know to be critical. These include but are not limited to:

- Enhancing the quality and technical skills of volunteer leaders;
- Equipping outdoor stewardship organizations (OSO) to work more effectively with land managers in planning and implementing stewardship projects;
- Strengthening the infrastructures of OSOs;
- Delivering a more uniform and consistent volunteer effort in meeting both on-going and emergent stewardship needs across the state; and,

- Offering volunteer engagement strategies that are meaningful and rewarding for the participants.

We envision that these standards will result in additional positive outcomes for OSO and public land managers (PLMs) when used as a guiding tool for OSO organizational development and practice. For example, standards may serve as:

- an internal programmatic audit tool for OSOs that provides an overall appreciation of where the organization is placed with respect to best management practices for volunteer engagement practices;
- a guidance tool or checklist to help identify opportunities for making organizational improvements;
- assurance for the PLM that the partnering OSO has an understanding of volunteer management best practices and is meeting those standards; and
- a tool to enable the OSO to be well positioned strategically to recruit and retain more volunteers as well as attract funding and work agreements for volunteer services.

The standards will be generic in scope, yet grounded in proven methodology as applied by successful OSOs and PLMs with whom they partner. The guide will describe what elements should be part of a “best practice” system for managing volunteers in partnership with land manager. The standards will define successful outcomes without mandating the methods employed to achieve them. This approach recognizes the various capacities of OSOs – ranging in organizational structure, size, and geographic reach -- and that the design and implementation of an outdoor volunteer management system optimally must reflect the unique conditions and circumstances of the organization.

#### Standards/Best Practices Deliverables

- Develop scope of work for standards development.
- Recruit, select and hire contractor to undertake the standards development scope of work.
- Establish a *Standards Review Panel* within COSC with primary role of identifying and approving future changes to the *Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Best Practices Guide*. An additional and on-going role of the *Review Panel* will be to promote the *Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Best Practices Guide* throughout the sector and facilitate training and educational initiatives related to the best practices.
- Online and/or conference call hosted focus groups, email surveys to gather standards criteria and relevant data.
- Initial draft of standards developed; preliminary draft approved by *Standards Review Panel*.
- Host regional trainings/meetings to introduce the *Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Best Practices Guide* and initiate compliance efforts with interested OSOs.

- *Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Best Practices Guide* promoted through COSC; selected organizations complete initial standards as case studies prior to full implementation.
- Final report produced by contractor for the *Standards Review Panel* including recommendations for full implementation in 2018 that includes feedback from focus groups, sample surveys, and organizational case studies undertaken in 2017.

### 3) Definition of stewardship metrics and unification in organizational data reporting

Currently, OSOs, PLMs, and funders utilize a wide variety of metrics to assess OSO efforts, but there exists no commonly held set of measures to assess the collective improvement of Colorado's outdoors, how these collective improvements affect the public's perception of stewardship, or how they help foster an ethic of stewardship. Further complicating the matter is the fact that OSOs come in all shapes and sizes. The larger OSOs have salaried staff and programmatic budgets offering volunteer opportunities statewide while others have formed as an all-volunteer organization with a focus on caring for a single park or open space. Collection of various data points necessarily, therefore, may vary depending on the organization.

For the most part, effective data collection is already understood to be an essential practice for OSOs. Yet, many smaller or less well organized OSOs lack resources to build or use a data collection framework that would enable their data to be useable as an evaluative tool for their own organizational improvement or aggregated with other organizations for stronger and more compelling collective impacts.

Up to now, several important commonly held metrics have been identified and collected from OSOs through work the COSC has done in recent years to produce its Volunteer Impact Study Reports<sup>3</sup>. While acknowledging the differences in data collection methodology, COSC has been able to piece data together for these reports using electronic surveys, follow-up phone calls, and rudimentary excel spreadsheets to do simple summations of adult and youth volunteers, volunteer hours, and hours worked in specific types of stewardship volunteerism, such as trail building, flood or fire restoration, environmental education, historic preservation and habitat management. A goal of this planning grant will be to significantly improve the quality of this data by establishing and tracking a standard set of metrics for all OSOs and PLMs.

During the planning period, we will build out a centralized reporting function within the aforementioned online data base, enabling OSOs to capture basic volunteer engagement metrics (e.g., total number of volunteers, volunteer value, diversity of volunteers), and specific project related, on-the-ground accomplishments (e.g., miles of trail built, miles of trail maintained, miles of

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<sup>3</sup> The COSC published four separate annual reports, titled *Colorado's Public Lands: Keeping Colorado's Outdoors Special*, for volunteer stewardship work on public lands through Colorado for calendar years 2010, 2011, 2012 and 2014. Copies of the reports are available at [www.voc.org](http://www.voc.org).

trail closed/restored, native vegetation planted). Coupled with organizational information (such as staff size, annual budget, geographic reach) the online database will be an important tool for impact and evaluative reporting. A commitment to use this centralized web-based collection tool would rank as an essential standard in the best practices guide.

#### Online Stewardship Metrics – Deliverables

- Develop scope of work for common online metrics collection.
- Secure graduate student/program assistance with portion of this project – research and survey development.
- Establish COSC working group to approve initial list of common metrics and database fields for common accomplishments reporting function in the database. An ongoing role for this group related to the common metrics and reporting metrics through the database will be necessary.
- Identify baseline metric information through past annual COSC volunteer impact reports.
- Develop and implement online survey of OSOs and land managers to better understand what stewardship metrics are collected and what are most valued. (Note: this will be incorporated as part of the survey already described in the Asset Database Deliverables.)
- Analyze survey data.
- Regional COSC meetings will be used to inform the development of the metrics and to share the common metrics reporting proposal to regional stewardship partners.
- Metrics fields and robust reporting functionality built into asset database.

#### 4. Planning efforts for three large-scale stewardship demonstration projects

The fourth activity to be undertaken in the planning period will be to define and initiate the necessary steps to undertake up to three large-scale stewardship demonstration projects, ideally in 2018. These demonstration projects are intended to test and model the use of various efforts undertaken during the planning period. Our intent is that the work we will have done during the planning period will optimally lead to immediate and more numerous long-term partnerships between and among OSOs and PLMs, strengthening their collective ability to accomplish larger and more impactful on-the-ground stewardship work. The demonstration projects will be planned to examine and evaluate:

- Intentional OSO coordination and support for collaboration among each other;
- Measureable on-the-ground stewardship outcomes and impact indicators for PLMs and OSOs;
- Increased levels of financial and other support for coordinated projects involving multiple partners; and,
- New and/or innovative approaches related to volunteer engagement and collaborative project management.

This fourth planning activity will result in the identification of potential 2018 project opportunities that lend themselves to large-scale collaborative efforts. As these projects are planned, consideration will be given to defining guidelines that support successful collaboration of OSOs. As a starting point, potential projects will be chosen and/or designed to meet these criteria:

- Projects will address a significant stewardship issue. Examples might include recreational access on trails and/or open space; natural disaster recovery such as fire and flood restoration; or watershed-scale restoration.
- Projects will be emotionally evocative and able to ignite an ethic of individual and community stewardship – a recognition that we can work together to achieve big positive change in the places we care about.
- Projects will be at-scale – where collaboration is essential, because no one OSO can accomplish them alone and larger efforts are tangibly realized through greater stewardship work being accomplished.
- Projects will have a clear purpose and demonstrable impact that effectively elevates the importance of stewardship as a statewide strategy for care of our public lands.
- Projects will galvanize not only OSOs, but others in the broader stewardship network.
- Projects will encourage and welcome a diverse range of volunteers, not requiring extensive skill to participate.
- Projects will require and build infrastructure that will support future collaboration among these OSOs. This infrastructure might include collaborative agreement frameworks, joint fundraising and marketing strategies, expanded training capacity, volunteer recruitment tools, and impact measurement tools.

#### Stewardship Demonstration Projects – Deliverables

- Develop scope for this portion of the planning proposal.
- Establish a working group of COSC to work on this with the contract project manager. Determine approval mechanism for larger COSC.
- Define guidelines for successful demonstration projects.
- Process developed and followed to identify partners and best demonstration projects.
- Report with specific proposal for each potential demonstration project will be developed.

**Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition Stewardship Initiative Planning Proposal**

Planning Project Manager (Contract) at \$3,800/mo. for 14 months	\$ 65,324
Contractor - Standards/Best Practices - \$750/mo. for 10 months	\$ 7,500
<b>Facilitation Costs:</b>	
- 6 Regional Workshops @ \$500 each	\$ 3,000
<b>Travel Costs:</b>	
Personal Vehicle Mileage	
- <i>Planning Project. Manager</i>	\$ 810
- <i>Standards/Best practices.</i>	\$ 648
Lodging - Regional meetings - \$130/night	
- <i>Planning Project. Manager</i>	\$ 780
- <i>Standards/Best practices</i>	\$ 780
Per diem - Reg. Meetings - \$69/day	
- <i>Planning Project. Manager</i>	\$ 414
- <i>Standards/Best practices</i>	\$ 414
<b>Asset Database Development</b>	
- <i>Development</i>	\$ 13,250
- <i>Monthly Hosting</i>	\$ 1,600
Grant Operating Fees/Charges -- (Overhead, payroll, printing, etc.) - 3.5% of Grant	\$ 3,500
<b>Other</b>	
Regional workshop expenses (food, rentals)	\$ 1,980
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$ 100,000</b>





Colorado Outdoor Stewardship Coalition  
Stewardship Initiative Planning Grant Time Line

	2016	2017												2018				NOTES
	Dec	Jan	Feb	March	April	May	June	July	Aug.	Sept.	Oct.	Nov.	Dec.	Jan	Feb.	March	April	
Focus groups and e-mail surveys to gather standards and relevant data.																		
Initial draft of standards developed; preliminary draft approved by Review Panel																		
Regional trainings/meetings to introduce Guide and initiate compliance efforts with interested OSOs.																		
Best Practices Guide promoted through COSC; selected organizations complete initial standards as case studies prior to full implementation.																		
Final report including recommendations produced for full implementation in 2018 that includes feedback from focus groups, sample surveys, and organizational case studies undertaken in 2017.																		
<b>Define Metrics and Unification in Metrics &amp; Reporting</b>																		
Develop scope of work for common online metrics collection.																		
Secure graduate student/program assistance with portion of this project – research and survey development.																		
Establish COSC working group to approve initial list of common metrics and database fields for common accomplishments reporting function in the database.																		An ongoing role for this group related to the common metrics and reporting metrics through the database will be necessary.





## COLORADO OUTDOOR STEWARDSHIP COALITION

### 2016 List of Participating Organizations

American Hiking Society  
Backcountry Horsemen of Colorado  
Bureau of Land Management - Royal Gorge Field Office  
Bureau of Land Management - Colorado Office  
City of Boulder Open Space and Mountain Parks  
Coalition of the Upper South Platte  
Colorado Department of Natural Resources  
Colorado Fourteeners Initiative  
Colorado Mountain Club  
Colorado Division of Parks and Wildlife  
Colorado Parks & Recreation Association  
Colorado State Trails Program  
Colorado Youth Corps Association  
Continental Divide Trail Coalition  
Douglas County Open Space  
Friends of the Dillon Ranger District  
Front Range Backcountry Horsemen  
Groundwork Denver  
Historicorps  
International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) & Colorado Mountain Bike Association (COMBA)  
Jefferson County Open Space  
Larimer County - Department of Natural Resources  
Leave No Trace  
National Park Service  
REI  
Roaring Fork Outdoor Volunteers  
Rocky Mountain Field Institute  
Salida Ranger District, Pike/San Isabel National Forest  
Tamarisk Coalition  
Trails 2000  
Tread Lightly  
US Forest Service - Region 2  
Volunteers for Outdoor Colorado  
Wildland Restoration Volunteers